

Application Serial No.: 10/803,701
Amdt. dated August 28, 2006
Reply to Final Office Action of June 7, 2006

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The Final Office Action dated June 7, 2006 and the references cited therein have been carefully considered. In response to the Office Action, Applicant has amended Claims 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 13 and 14 and canceled Claims 5 which, when considered with the remarks set forth below, are deemed to place the case with Claims 1, 3-4, 6-10 and 12-14 in condition for allowance.

In the Office Action, Claims 1, 3-6, 10 and 12-13 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,931,110 to Bates et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,233,316 to Schier et al. Specifically, the Examiner states that the Bates patent teaches a method for placing a telephone call from a caller using a prepaid phone card, wherein the caller is connected with a caller interface having a speech recognition application for comparing voice input from the caller with personalized prepaid phone card information previously stored in a database. The Examiner notes that the Bates patent does not suggest receiving voice input from the caller in the form of a personal identification number (PIN) and converting the spoken PIN into computer readable text for comparing with a PIN assigned to the caller previously stored in a database. However, the Examiner cites the Schier patent as disclosing a system utilizing voice activated dialing which enables the user to enter a pass code (PIN) by voice. Therefore, the Examiner concludes that it would have been obvious to combine the teachings of Schier with the method disclosed in the Bates patent.

Claims 7-9 and 14 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Bates patent in view of the Schier patent and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,529,593 to Nelson. The Examiner notes that neither the Bates patent nor the Schier patent discloses a database accessible by a caller via the internet for storing and modifying personalized prepaid phone card information. However, the Examiner notes that the Nelson patent teaches such feature. Again, the Examiner concludes that it would have been obvious to combine the teachings of the Nelson, Schier and Bates patent to arrive at the invention defined in Claim 7-9 and 14.

In response, Applicants have amended independent Claims 1 and 10 to define a method and system for placing a telephone call from a caller using a prepaid phone card. The method and system involve connecting a caller with a caller interface having a speech

recognition application, wherein the caller initially dials a telephone network access number to connect the caller to the caller interface. The caller interface identifies the caller based on the origination of the initial telephone call and then receives voice input from the caller in the form of a desired call connection. The caller interface then compares the voice input spoken by the caller with a personal voice print assigned to the caller's phone card and previously stored in a database. If the voice input matches the personal voice print stored in the database, the caller interface places the desired call connection. It is respectfully submitted that none of the cited prior art references, taken alone or combined, discloses a method for placing a telephone call, wherein the caller is identified both by the origination of the telephone call and by comparison with a stored voice print, as defined in amended Claims 1 and 10.

In particular, the present invention defined by Claims 1 and 10 provides an additional layer of security not found in the prior art. Moreover, the present invention achieves this while at the same time eliminating some of the steps required to place a telephone call using a prepaid phone card, thereby providing faster and more efficient service. Specifically, the steps of prompting the caller for a personal identification number (PIN) and inputting and verifying the PIN have been eliminated without sacrificing security. This is done by verifying both the origination of the call and the user's voice as the user verbally requests a desired call connection. The prior art does not disclose such feature.

For example, while the Bates patent discloses a system utilizing a voice recognition application, this application is only used to verify a user's voice pattern when the user is asked to speak an arbitrary phrase. (See column 4, lines 3-11.) Also, while the Bates system further checks if use from a specified telephone number is enabled, there is no mention in the Bates patent of identifying the caller by both the origination of the telephone call and the voice input associated with a particular call connection.

Turning to the Schier patent, placing a telephone call with the system described therein requires the steps of initially prompting a caller to verbally input identity data, comparing the identity data provided with previously stored information relating to the particular caller, prompting the caller for the destination number if the identity data matches the stored information and then placing the call based on the destination number provided by

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the caller. Thus, placing a call with the Schier system requires the interim step of inputting verbal identity information before a "place call" prompt is made. In other words, only after the initial voice input is matched to a previously stored voice print is the caller prompted to input a desired call connection.

In contrast, the present invention involves a method wherein a caller stores a voice print with respect to a particular call connection in a database. When the caller desires to make that call connection, the caller provides a verbal input and the caller interface compares the input to the previously stored voice print associated with the call connection. If the verbal input matches the voice print associated with the call connection, the caller interface places the telephone call. There is no teaching or suggestion of this feature in either the Bates patent or the Schier patent. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that Claims 1 and 10, as amended, and the claims that depend therefrom patentably distinguish over the prior art.

In view of the foregoing amendment and remarks, favorable consideration and allowance of the application with Claims 1, 3-4, 6-10 and 12-14 are respectfully solicited. If the Examiner believes that a telephone interview would assist in moving the application toward allowance, he is respectfully invited to contact the Applicants' attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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